

REMARKS

In the Office Action, Claims 1, 3 to 9, 11 to 34, 36 to 42 and 44 to 64 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over U.S. Patent No. 4,926,325 (Benton) in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,182,218 (Saito). The rejections are respectfully traversed, and Applicant requests that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw the rejections in light of the following comments.

The present invention generally concerns image processing and user information of a buyer or a seller of an image processing apparatus. Among its many features, the present invention includes multiplexing user information of a seller or a buyer of an image processing apparatus or product to an output image to be output by the image processing apparatus.

Referring specifically to the claims, independent Claim 1 is directed to an image processing apparatus comprising user information storing means for storing user information of a seller or a buyer of the image processing apparatus, and multiplexing means for multiplexing the stored user information to an output image to be output by the image processing apparatus, wherein, the user information of the seller or buyer of the image processing apparatus is obtained and stored in the storing means when the image processing apparatus is sold through a network, and wherein the user information multiplexed to the output image is not visible in the output image.

Independent Claims 9, 17, 19, 42 and 50 are method or computer-readable storage medium claims that substantially correspond to Claim 1.

Independent Claim 6 includes features along the lines of Claim 1, but is more specifically directed to an electronic commerce system which performs electronic commerce connecting one terminal with another terminal through a network, the system

comprising information setting means for setting, in an image processing apparatus, information of a seller or a buyer of the image processing apparatus, the information being obtained through the network, and multiplexing means for multiplexing the information of the seller or buyer of the image processing apparatus set by the information setting means to an output image to be output by the image processing apparatus, wherein the set information multiplexed to the output image is not visible in the output image.

Independent Claims 14, 18, 39 and 47 are method, system and computer-readable storage medium claims that substantially correspond to Claim 6.

Independent Claim 26 also includes features along the lines of Claim 1, but is more specifically directed to an image processing method for a image processing apparatus, comprising the steps of a user information receiving step for the image processing apparatus receiving user information of a seller or a buyer of an image processing product from the image processing product, and a multiplexing step for the image processing apparatus to multiplex the received user information of the seller or buyer of the information processing product to an output image to be output by the image processing apparatus, wherein, the user information is received by the image processing apparatus when the image processing product is sold through a network, and wherein the user information multiplexed in the output image is not visible in the output image.

Independent Claim 57 substantially corresponds to Claim 26.

Independent Claim 34 also includes features substantially corresponding to Claim 1, but is more specifically directed to an image processing apparatus comprising a memory storing user information of a seller or a buyer of the image processing apparatus, and a controller multiplexing the stored user information of the seller or buyer of the information processing apparatus to an output image to be output by the image processing

apparatus, wherein, the user information is obtained and stored in the memory when the image processing apparatus is sold through a network, and wherein the user information multiplexed in the output image is not visible in the output image.

The applied art is not seen to disclose or to suggest the features of independent Claims 1, 6, 9, 14, 17, 18, 19, 26, 34, 39, 42, 47, 50 and 57, and in particular is not seen to disclose or to suggest at least the feature of multiplexing user information of a seller or a buyer of an image processing apparatus or product to an output image to be output by the image processing apparatus.

As understood by Applicant, Benton discloses a facsimile system for conducting financial transactions for buying/selling goods. According to Benton, both a buyer and a seller are issued identification cards. The cards are inserted into a card reading device so that a financial transaction (e.g., transfer of funds) between the buyer, seller and a financial institution (e.g., a bank) can take place. When the financial transaction is completed, a facsimile machine can then generate and print out a transaction record, which may include information of the seller and information of the buyer. (See Benton, Abstract and Column 2, lines 45 to 54).

Page 2 of the Office Action asserts that Benton (Summary and Column 2, line 42 to Column 4, line 62) discloses user information storing means for storing user information of a seller or buyer of an image processing apparatus and multiplexing means for multiplexing the user information to an output image wherein the user information of the seller or buyer of the image processing is obtained and stored in the storing means when the image processing is sold through a network.

However, Benton is not seen to disclose or to suggest at least the feature of multiplexing user information of a seller or a buyer of an image processing apparatus or product to an output image to be output by the image processing apparatus.

In particular, while Benton adds user information to a transaction record relating to a "buyer" and a "seller", the information does not relate to the buyer and seller of the image processing apparatus itself, and rather is related to the buyer and seller involved in the financial transaction being processed with the devices. (See Benton, Column 2, line 42 to Column 3, line 11 and Column 3, lines 38 to 42). In fact, the user information is not seen to have anything to do with the devices. Similarly, Benton's storage means stores information relating to buyers and sellers in a particular transaction, including account numbers and balances and transaction amounts and times, rather than any information relating to the buyer or seller of the image processing apparatus. (See Benton, Column 3, lines 38 to 42 and Column 4, lines 1 to 7).

Accordingly, Benton is not seen to disclose or to suggest at least the feature of multiplexing user information of a seller or a buyer of an image processing apparatus or product to an output image to be output by the image processing apparatus.

Saito has been reviewed and is not seen to remedy the deficiencies of Benton. In particular, as understood by Applicants, it merely discloses a system for managing digital content in which a public key can be put in a public key distribution screen to be distributed by a network. Image data to which information on the owner of the public key or on the user is added as an invisible electronic watermark and entered to the public key distribution screen, so that the authenticity of the public key and user is checked by the public-key distribution center by detecting the watermark. (See Saito, Abstract). However, Saito is not seen to multiplex user information of a seller or a buyer of an image

processing apparatus or product to an output image to be output by the image processing apparatus at all. In particular, the added watermark is used to identify and monitor the actual content or image, rather than anything having to do with the buyer or seller of an image processing apparatus.

In view of the foregoing deficiencies of the applied art, independent Claims 1, 6, 9, 14, 17, 18, 19, 26, 34, 39, 42, 47, 50 and 57 are believed to be allowable.

The other claims in the application are each dependent from the independent claims discussed above and are therefore believed to be allowable over the applied references for at least the same reasons. Because each dependent claim is deemed to define an additional aspect of the invention, however, the individual consideration of each on its own merits is respectfully requested.

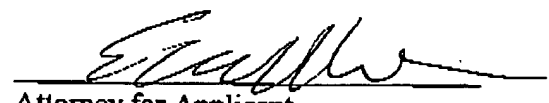
No other matters having been raised, the entire application is believed to be in condition for allowance, and such action is respectfully requested at the Examiner's earliest convenience.

#### REQUEST FOR EXAMINER INTERVIEW

In the event that the Examiner finds the application is not yet in condition for allowance, he is respectfully requested to contact Applicant's undersigned representative prior to issuance of the next Office Action on the merits to discuss any outstanding issues so that Applicant can obtain the earliest possible allowance of this case.

Applicant's undersigned attorney may be reached in our Costa Mesa, California office at (714) 540-8700. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below-listed address.

Respectfully submitted,



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